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Our Boys: Duxbury in the Civil War

"Our Boys!" is the special exhibit in the Potter Museum at the King Caesar House this summer. Created by Civil War historian Richard Dobbins, Campbell Waterhouse, and Elisa Fontanes, the exhibit honors the deeds and the memory of "Our boys," Duxbury men who served in the Civil War.

Whenever the call for troops was sent throughout the land, Duxbury men were quick to respond. Shoemakers, farmers, mariners, blacksmiths -- they came from all walks of life. There were men whose names echoes those written on the *Mayflower Compact* and men who had newly arrived from their "old country." Our boys from Duxbury were in battles that ranged from the bayous of Louisiana to the humid Virginia shore. Marches were as long as 20 miles a day, with a diet of mostly hard tack, coffee and pork fat.

In August 1862, there were 56 enlisted men from Duxbury in Co. E., 18th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. The following January, the Hon. Gershom Bradford Weston, owner of the King Caesar House, received a letter from a Duxbury soldier with the following excerpt:

"...in behalf of the remaining few of our Duxbury boys that I have taken the liberty to address you, there are but 6 of us as now in the company and 2 on the wagon train, we have lost many by actions, and many have been discharged from disability, and a few are now in the General Hospitals, one or 2 are at the Paroled Prisoners Camp at Annapolis, Maryland, but the 6 veterans who now remain have been through all the fatigue and exposure, long weary marches, engagements and skirmishes with our regiment, and we have had an equal share with other regiments, on the presumption that we have done our duty, and that you and every other patriotic citizen of Duxbury have expected such of us, and are willing, yet not only willing but anxious to give us your gratitude and thanks...."

The Grand Army of the Republic was created as a

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Civil War veteran's organization in 1866. Duxbury's GAR Post #165 was named for William Wadsworth, a private in the 4th Massachusetts Infantry who died in 1863 at Baton Rouge from gunshot wounds sustained in battle. The hall for Duxbury's Post #165 is now the Merna home on Washington St.

The Society's exhibit examines Duxbury's GAR as a social and fraternal organization that honored the heroism of local servicemen. More than 300 Civil War veterans now lie in Mayflower Cemetery. Many of the artifacts in this exhibit came to the DR&HS from the GAR Memorial Hall Assn in 1956.